

UNITED STATES MARINE CORPS
Marine Corps University
User's Guide to Marine Corps Values

MARINE CORPS CORE VALUES

1. Introduction. The 30th Commandant, General Carl E. Mundy, Jr. wrote in a 1992 memorandum that "**Marines are held to the highest standards of personal conduct. The Nation expects that from us. The personal and professional conduct, decency, integrity, and accountability of Marines must be beyond reproach. This is a non-negotiable principle.**" What General Mundy was talking about are the Values that Marines have displayed for over 200 years in peacetime and combat. These Values of **HONOR**, **COURAGE**, and **COMMITMENT** were further defined by him in his "Statement on Core Values of United States Marines."

Marines bring with them when they enter the Corps their own set of Core Values. Personal Core Values are instilled in Marines by their parents, families, religious beliefs, schools, peers, and other influences upon their lives. These individual sets of values may be strong or they may be weak. Regardless of background, every Marine should understand that being a Marine entails embracing and adhering to Marine Corps Core Values.

The 31st Commandant, General Charles C. Krulak said in July 1996 that "**Our challenge is to be a Corps of men and women who consistently represent the highest moral character in and out of uniform. Character creates a foundation of which successful military units are built. From this foundation, Honor, Courage, and Commitment will always be evident, providing the perfect description of a United States Marine.**"

2. Overview. This discussion guide is designed to help leaders at all levels to discuss Marine Corps Values with their Marines. Your task is to help your Marines understand how their understanding and commitment to these ideals will make them better Marines and, ultimately, better people. This subject is best approached within small groups of Marines who have a common bond such as a squad, platoon, section, or office affiliation. Other chapters in the guide may prove useful in preparing you to lead this group discussion.

3. References.

FMFM 1-0, Leading Marines
FM 22-100, Military Leadership
ALMAR 248/96, Character

Commandant's Statement on Core Values of United States
Marines
Ethos and Values, November 1995 Marine Corps Gazette

4. Discussion Leader Notes.

a. Preparing for this discussion should not be difficult. The references contain much background on how values, traits, and one's character affect leadership and the effect good and bad leadership has on combat efficiency and morale. The main purpose of this discussion should be on how the character and values of individual Marines also affects combat and unit efficiency, other Marines, their own family and friends and, ultimately, their nation.

b. It may be useful to prepare some scenarios that deal with this subject. Many of the scenarios that appear elsewhere in this guide may prove useful.

c. Don't assume that every Marine entered the Marine Corps with the same values system that you have or that every Marine believes everything that you believe. Regardless of one's background or upbringing, every Marine should embrace these values, display them, and live them as much as possible. No Marine is perfect but we should each aspire to reach the ideal and be improving all the time.

5. Discussion.

a. What are the Marine Corps Core Values?

(1) HONOR - The Marine Corps is a unique institution, not just to the military, but to the nation and the world. As the guardians of the standards of excellence for our society, Marines must possess the highest sense of gallantry in serving the United States of America and embody responsibility to duty above self, including, but not limited to:

Integrity, Demonstrating the highest standards of consistent adherence to right, legal and ethical conduct.

Responsibility, Personally accepting the consequences for decisions and actions. Coaching right decisions of subordinates. A chain is only as strong as the weakest individual link, but a battalion of Marines is more like a cable. Together we are stronger than any individual strand, but one strand may hold us together in a crisis if it's strong enough. One Marine taking responsibility for a situation may save the day.

Honesty, Telling the truth. Overt honesty in word and action and clarifying possible misunderstanding or misrepresentation caused by silence or inaction when you should speak up. Respecting other's property and demonstrating fairness in all actions. Marines do not lie, cheat, or steal.

Tradition, Demonstrating respect for the customs, courtesies, and traditions developed over many years for good reason, which produce a common Marine Corps history and identity. Respect for the heritage and traditions of others, especially those we encounter in duty around the world.

(2) **COURAGE** - Moral, mental, and physical strength to resist opposition, face danger, and endure hardship, including, but not limited to:

Self-Discipline, Marines hold themselves responsible for their own actions and others responsible for their actions. Marines are committed to maintaining physical, moral, and mental health, to fitness and exercise, and to life long learning.

Patriotism, Devotion to and defense of one's country. The freely chosen, informed willingness to support and defend the Constitution of the United States.

Loyalty, Steady reliability to do one's duty in service to the United States of America, the United States Marine Corps, one's command, one's fellow Marines, Sailors, Soldiers, Airmen, citizens, oneself, and to family.

Valor, Boldness and determination in facing danger in battle, and the daily commitment to excellence and honesty in actions small and large.

(3) **COMMITMENT** - The promise or pledge to complete a worthy goal by worthy means which requires identification with that goal and demonstrated actions to support that goal, including, but not limited to:

Competence, Maintaining, and improving one's skill level to support the team. Commitment to growing toward a standard of excellence second to none.

Teamwork, Individual effort in support of other team members in accomplishing the team's mission. Marines take care of their own. All worthwhile accomplishments are the result of a team effort.

Selflessness, Marines take care of their subordinates, their families, their fellow Marines before themselves. The

welfare of our country and our Corps is more important than our individual welfare.

Concern for People, The Marine Corps is the custodian of this nation's future, her young people. We exist to defend the nation, but as importantly, we are in the business of creating honorable citizens. Everyone is of value, regardless of race, nation of origin, religion, or gender. Concern includes a commitment to improving the level of education, skill, self-esteem, and quality of life for Marines and their families. On the battlefield, a Marine is the fiercest of all warriors and the most benevolent of conquerors.

Spiritual Heritage, The U.S. Constitution, the Pledge of Allegiance, and the creeds that guide our nation recognize the value of religious and spiritual heritage of individuals and base our understanding of rights and duties on the endowment of all people, by God, with the inalienable rights of life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. Marines maintain spiritual health and growth to nurture enduring values and acquire a source of strength required for success in battle and the ability to endure hardship.

b. Why are the Marine Corps Core Values important?

(1) No group functions well unless all members of the group "buy in" to the ideals and goals of the group. Individuals have impact, but a team working together is stronger than the individual members of the team. Members of a team with a common mission function more efficiently and effectively if they all believe in the team, its mission, and have a common set of ideals.

(2) A common set of values to which every Marine adheres to the best of his or her ability gives us the common ground to build strong teams. As important, if every Marine works to uphold the Corps' Core Values, their fellow Marines are more willing to place trust and confidence in that Marine's willingness to do the right thing, whether in peacetime or combat. Strong Marines, believing in the same ideals, adhering to the same code of behavior and ethics, working to accomplish the same mission are an unbeatable combination.

(3) Every Marine is a representative of their Corps. On duty or on liberty, every action reflects either positively or negatively on the what the American people and the world think of the Marine Corps. Strive your hardest to adhere to the values that make a Marine unique, and you will not let the Corps, your fellow Marines, your family, or your Country down.

(4) The 31st Commandant, General Charles C. Krulak says that the Marine Corps does two important things for America, wins battles and makes Marines. The old recruiting poster says "The Marines Make Men, Body-Mind-Spirit." General Krulak says "The Marines Make Marines, Body-Mind-Spirit." The triangle is only strong if all three sides are complete. Marines are physically fit because it is our culture to be strong. Marines are mentally fit because our Marine culture tells us to pursue the study of our profession, the profession of war. Marines are morally fit because we believe in and practice our Marine Corps Core Values.

6. Appendices.

Appendix A: Commandant's Statement On Core Values of United States Marines

Appendix B: ALMAR 248/96 - Character

Appendix C: Ethos and Values, November 1995 Marine Corps Gazette

APPENDIX A

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TO ALMAR
BT
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ALMAR 248/96
MSGID/GENADMIN/CMC//
SUBJ/CHARACTER//

RMKS/1. MARINES ARE MEN AND WOMEN OF CHARACTER, WIDELY RECOGNIZED FOR THEIR MORAL EXCELLENCE, SELFLESS COURAGE, COMMITTED PRINCIPLES, AND SOUND JUDGEMENTS. CHARACTER CAN BE DESCRIBED AS A "MORAL COMPASS" WITHIN ONE'S SELF, THAT HELPS US MAKE RIGHT DECISIONS EVEN IN THE MIDST OF THE SHIFTING WINDS OF ADVERSITY. UNWAVERING CHARACTER ENCOURAGES US TO PURSUE HONORABLE IDEALS. A WISE PERSON ONCE DECLARED, "IDEALS ARE LIKE STARS -- WE MAY NEVER REACH THEM BUT WE CHART OUR COURSE BY THEM."

2. CHARACTER IS DEVELOPED EVERYDAY IN GARRISON, ON DEPLOYMENT, ABOARD SHIP, ON DUTY OR ON LIBERTY, WHEREVER WE ARE AROUND THE WORLD. WE ARE NOT BORN WITH CHARACTER. IT IS DEVELOPED BY THE EXPERIENCES AND DECISIONS THAT GUIDE OUR LIVES. NEITHER CAN WE BORROW THE CHARACTER OR REPUTATION OF ANOTHER. EACH INDIVIDUAL CREATES, DEVELOPS AND NURTURES THEIR OWN. THAT IS WHY EACH OF US MUST LEARN TO MAKE GOOD MORAL DECISIONS IN OUR LIVES. WHEN THE RIGHT COURSE OF ACTION IS UNCLEAR, ONLY THE HABIT OF DOING THE RIGHT THING, AS PRACTICED EVERYDAY IN ALL AREAS OF OUR LIVES, CAN BE COUNTED UPON. WELL-DEVELOPED CHARACTER IS OUR SHIELD AGAINST FEAR AND DESPAIR. THAT'S WHY NAPOLEON SAID THAT IN WAR, THE IMPORTANCE OF THE MORAL, RELATIVE TO THE PHYSICAL, IS THREE TO ONE.

3. CHARACTER IS READINESS. THE CORPS IS A READY FORCE, NOT A FORCE THAT WHEN CALLED MUST STRUGGLE TO GET READY. OUR CHALLENGE IS TO BE A CORPS OF MEN AND WOMEN WHO CONSISTENTLY REPRESENT THE HIGHEST MORAL CHARACTER IN AND OUT OF UNIFORM. CHARACTER CREATES A FOUNDATION ON WHICH SUCCESSFUL MILITARY UNITS ARE BUILT. FROM THIS FOUNDATION, HONOR, COURAGE, AND COMMITMENT WILL ALWAYS BE EVIDENT, PROVIDING THE PERFECT DESCRIPTION OF A UNITED STATES MARINE.

4. SEMPER FIDELIS, C.C. KRULAK.//

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COMMANDANT'S STATEMENT ON CORE VALUES OF THE UNITED STATES MARINES

Generation after generation of American men and women have given special meaning to the term United States Marine. They have done so by their performance on and off the battlefield. Feared by enemies, respected by allies, and loved by the American people, Marines are a "special breed." This reputation was gained and is maintained by a set of enduring Core Values. These values form the cornerstone, the bedrock, and the heart of our character. They are the guiding beliefs and principles that give us strength, influence our attitudes, and regulate our behavior. They bond our Marine Family into a total force that can meet any challenge.

HONOR: The bedrock of our character. The quality that guides Marines to exemplify the ultimate in ethical and moral behavior; never to lie, cheat, or steal; to abide by an uncompromising code of integrity; to respect human dignity; to have respect and concern for each other. The quality of maturity, dedication, trust, and dependability that commits Marines to act responsibly; to be accountable for actions; to fulfill obligations; and to hold others accountable for their actions.

COURAGE: The heart of our Core Values, courage is the mental, moral, and physical strength ingrained in Marines to carry them through the challenges of combat and the mastery of fear; to do what is right; to adhere to a higher standard of personal conduct; to lead by example, and to make tough decisions under stress and pressure. It is the inner strength that enables a Marine to take that extra step.

COMMITMENT: The spirit of determination and dedication within members of a force of arms that leads to professionalism and mastery of the art of war. It leads to the highest order of discipline for unit and self; it is the ingredient that enables 24-hour a day dedication to Corps and Country; pride; concern for others; and an unrelenting determination to achieve a standard of excellence in every endeavor. Commitment is the value that establishes the Marine as the warrior and citizen others strive to emulate.

Reaffirm these Core Values and ensure they guide your performance, behavior, and conduct every minute of every day.

C. E. MUNDY, JR.
General, U.S. Marine Corps
Commandant of the Marine Corps

APPENDIX C

Ethos and Values, NOV 95 Marine Corps Gazette

Long before we wear the uniform, long before the eagle, globe, and anchor is etched in our soul--we sense the special character that sets Marines apart. Silent to the ear--Marine ethos, values, and character speak to the nation's heart. They say more about who we are than the dignity of our uniforms, the pageantry of our parades, or the inspiration of our hymn. The nation expects her Marines to be the world's finest military professionals. The nation demands that her Marines be forever capable and ready, rich in history and traditions, and instilled with the traditional virtues--honor, courage, and commitment--that demonstrate we remain faithful. In short, we must deserve the nation's trust.

... the Nation has placed a measure of its trust and hope in the one hundred thousand men who have volunteered to serve the cause of freedom as United States Marines. The Marine Corps is always ready to fulfill that trust.

General Alexander A. Vandegrift
10 November 1946

Trust is not given. Nor is it easily earned. Today the trust of the nation is our inheritance--a trust earned through the selfless valor and determined actions generations of Marines on the distant shores and misty battlefields of our storied past. Left to us as part of our predecessor's legacy, it is now ours to sustain. The stewardship of this trust is our sacred responsibility. It is a debt we owe to those who have gone before us, and a promise we make to those who will follow. It is the guiding light of our ethos.

This high name of distinction and soldierly repute we who are Marines today have received from those who preceded us in the Corps. With it we also received from them the eternal spirit which has animated our Corps from generation and has been the distinguishing mark of the Marines in every age.

Major General John A. Lejeune
10 November 1921

Not just what we do, our ethos is who we are and what we believe. Today, as in the past, the spirit of this ethos is born in the hearts of men and women drawn to the Corps by a common calling--a desire to serve, and a sense of duty born in ideals like patriotism, valor, and fidelity. It grows as they are transformed--from citizen-patriots of the great American stock, into Marine--mind, body, and soul. Like knights of legend, Marines are not made, they are transformed. They are forged in the furnace of hardship, tempered by the bonds of shared hazard, sharpened by the whet-stones of training and education, and honed to a fine edge by innovation and ingenuity. Marines, once transformed, are forever changed--instilled with beliefs, ideals and virtues that have meaning deeper than words. Today, some of these ideals--honor, courage, commitment--form the bedrock of our institutional and individual character. They are our core values.

He is the descendant of a line of heroes, the bearer of a name hailed as foremost in the annals of his country, the custodian of a long cherished reputation for honor, valor, and integrity.

Major General John A. Lejeune
10 November 1922

To be honorable one must live with honor. To live with honor, we must be faithful to our cause, to our purpose, to our beliefs. We must be faithful to our country, to our Corps, and to each other. This faithfulness is never situational, and it must never be compromised. We must respect each other, believe in each other, trust each other.

Their training, their spirit, and their cold courage prevailed against fanatical opposition.

Secretary of the Navy, James B. Forrestal
speaking on the occasion of the
Marine Corps Birthday, November 1968

Commitment is a promise of resolve. Commitment is the investment that turns ideas into action. The continuity of commitment is dedication and determination, and the product is mastery of one's profession. Our commitment reflects our "attitude in action."

On this birthday, our nation finds in its Marine Corps, men and women who exemplify the ideals upon which our country was founded--honor, courage, and commitment. In its Marines, it also finds men and women who know the meaning of patriotism, valor, duty, strength, discipline, and innovation--men and women who love country and Corps. But as we reflect on our history, ethos and values, remember--the future will judge its past-

And when at some future date the high court of history sits in judgment on each of us, recording whether in our brief span of service we fulfilled our responsibilities to the state, our success or failure in whatever office we hold, will be measured by the answers to four questions: First, were we truly men of courage...Second, were we truly men of judgment...Third were we truly men of integrity...Finally, were we truly men of dedication?

John F. Kennedy

A wise gentleman once stated that America has a Marine Corps because it wants a Marine Corps. Today, America wants a Marine Corps because she knows not only what we do, but also something about who we are, and what we believe--the standards of our ethos and our values. The nation wants its Corps of Marines because we are a force she can trust. Our responsibility today and for the future is to preserve that trust--honor, courage, and commitment should sustain us.